

THE MILE END WEST PROJECT

A study of community development in an  
immigrant community

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## PREFACE

The Mile End West Project (M.E.W.P.) was a consequence of the International Branch of the Montreal YMCA redefining its role in relation to the surrounding community. This community, in the north central area of the city with Park Avenue as its focus, has traditionally served as an initial settling place for immigrants. Through the late fifties and continuing into the sixties the influx of Greeks was such that the area's identification moved from an earlier link with the Jewish community to one as "Greek Avenue".

This relatively rapid transition of population had several consequences. Most notable was the almost complete absence of local social services giving recognition to the Greek fact. The earlier Jewish community had established its own services, however, as the population changed these services were discontinued. It was this condition in the area coupled with the disunity of the Greek community, for which there are ample historical explanations, that prompted the initiation of the project.

The YMCA was instrumental in the establishment of the project on several accounts:

- 1) it demonstrated a willingness to support innovation and to hire non-traditional YMCA staff;
- 2) it provided initial funds, both from the Montreal YMCA and the Canadian National Council of YMCAs;
- 3) it demonstrated flexibility in its structural relationships with the project and the local community.

\* A Park Avenue restaurant which became a major meeting place for persons involved with M.E.W.P.

The Mile End West Project was initiated in 1968 with the major attention being given to a thorough researching and documentation of the community. Full operational status was reached in the fall of 1969 with the gaining of a grant from Welfare Grants, National Health and Welfare. The funds from this grant and the continuing financial support of the YMCA formed the financial base for the following three years. This financial base did not exceed fifty thousand dollars in any one year while the total expenses of the project exceeded three hundred thousand dollars. The difference being the result of a number of small government and foundation grants and community efforts.

The purpose of the following evaluation is to consider the effect of the Mile End West Project on the community. The Project's effects, however, have not been restricted to the local community and some indication of this can be found in studies completed for the Montreal YMCA.\*

Finally, the Mile End West Project placed great demands on its staff who since its completion have gone many different ways, however, for me the "gringo" of the team those years remain invaluable and highly significant both in terms of knowledge gained and the persons, staff and community, with whom I worked.

K.W. Johnston

- \* A) YMCA Community Outreach - The Experience of the Montreal and Toronto Associations, A. Stinson & A. Clarke
- B) The First Paper - S. Rozenblatt



### INTRODUCTION

At the time of undertaking this evaluation the MEWP has stopped functioning for a year. I feel this may allow for a more realistic view of the effect the project had on the community and on how successful it was in achieving its objectives of citizen participation and action. If indeed the MEWP had not succeeded in setting up viable citizen organizations to deal with community problems, a year of absence would have resulted in a weakening or a disappearance of these organizations. In the final analysis this must be the test of the effectiveness of a community development project.

C. SIRROS  
MONTREAL  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE GREEK COMMUNITY BEFORE MEWP

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It is, of course, extremely difficult to give a complete picture of a community within the confines of a written report or indeed any report. The word ghetto has been used to describe the area known as the Greek community. Cultural ghetto is a more apt description. The Greek community was characterized by a very tight cultural isolation. It consists of approximately 50,000 people. The great majority are to be found in the Park Avenue - Park Extension areas. Perhaps the best way to indicate what the Greek community was like before the MEWP, for the purposes of this report, is to look at the vehicles that existed for integration into Canadian society. It may sound rather glib to say this, but in effect there were none. The community organizations consisted mainly of associations of people from the same geographic area in the old country: the Cretans Associations, the Roumeliotan Association, the Iperoton Association, etc. The list numbers approximately forty. The main function of these associations was social - to bring people from the same area together. This served to keep alive the memory of the old country, the old way of life, the old traditions, etc. An important result of this was to keep the focus of attention away from the problems facing people here. These very problems, by providing a striking contrast (e.g. working conditions, housing, education, etc.) served to strengthen the idealization of life back in the village. Each of these associations kept some ties with the old country in the form of contributions to village funds, to needy families, churches, etc. These local associations were made up, in general, of people who had not been here more than ten to fifteen years. Parallel to the existence of these associations there was the official Hellenic Canadian Community of Greater Montreal. This association sponsors the churches and has attempted to serve as the official spokesman for the Greek community. The Hellenic



Community was characterized by an almost total lack of contact, concern, and involvement in the life of the Greek immigrant. The leadership was comprised generally of old, established families, in most cases quite wealthy, who have been in this country since the beginning of this century. There was a definite feeling of "they and us" amongst Greeks about the Hellenic Community. The membership of this "official" Community hovers around the one hundred mark (official figures are hard to obtain) and General Meetings rarely draw more than seventy people.

To compound an already difficult situation there existed a definite lack of unity amongst even the immigrant population. In fact it may be said that there was a state of active disunity. Political events in Greece during 1967 served as a catalyst for such disunity. Many Greeks had left Greece for political reasons as well as economic ones. There were those who wanted to forget all about any sort of politics, those who wanted to continue their fight against the Greek regime, those who supported the Greek regime and those who feared any sort of identification with any of these groups. Suddenly people who had previously been friends began to question each other on the issue of the coup d'etat. Suspicion, long a trait of people who must fight for their survival, began to creep into almost all community affairs.

In the realm of communications, Greek language radio has long been a part of the Greek community. Time was bought on CFMB and the programme was mainly an hour or two a day of Greek music. There also existed a cable radio station, CHCR. There were two local newspapers - The Hellenic Postman and the Greek Canadian Tribune. Both were primarily concerned with political development in Greece and to a minor extent with attacking the Hellenic Community.



There was almost no contact with the schools, Parent-teacher nights were generally poorly attended, and few had any idea about what was going on in the schools.

To summarize, the Greek community was to a great extent isolated. It looked towards Greece for comfort and ignored local issues. Its own professionals and more established members ignored it. It existed in a state of disunity and an atmosphere of mistrust.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE MEWP AND THE ISSUES**

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In its three year life the MEWP worked at setting up organizations run by local citizens which would help solve some of the problems of the community. There were three major problem areas identified by staff members. First was the whole area of education. Contact between the home and school was minimal. Parents exhibited a fear, one might say, of the educational institutions. Being immigrants, not speaking the language well, assuming that one did not question what was happening in the schools (a carry over from the old country where parents committees are unheard of), not feeling secure in their right to be here, all resulted in a very passive involvement in educational affairs. The second problem area was that of employment. For many of the same reasons plus an ignorance of labour laws, it was observed that many Greek immigrants were working for below minimum wage, were not getting vacation pay, and were generally abused (e.g. welfare rights, workmens compensation, etc.). The third area was a more general one and contributed to the existence of the above two problem areas. The Greek immigrant was ignorant to a large extent of Canadian/Quebec laws, customs and history. They were still largely tuned in to what was happening in the old country and avoiding getting involved with what was happening around them and to them in this country. Daily newspapers, television and radio were in a foreign language to them. They thus did not participate in the Canadian/Quebec culture. Their own mass media to a large extent ignored the problems of immigrants and focused on Greek news.

The MEWP attacked these three problems on three different fronts. Each solution, or attempted solution, contributed somewhat to the solution of the other problems. This was so because the biggest block to the solution of these problems was the fear of involvement. As people slowly broke through



this barrier they began to feel more and more confident about dealing with the issues surrounding them as well as interacting with the larger community.

Indeed, an understanding of why some community action projects succeed and some fail depends on an understanding of how people can become involved. Although I will again make reference to this point in the following chapter, I would like to turn my attention to this area now and look at how the MEWP dealt with the three areas I have mentioned.

### The Basic Hypothesis

The MEWP operated in all three areas with one basic hypothesis.

In Mr. K. Johnston's\* words,

"only when the community has gained the required self-confidence, awareness, unity is it possible for it to initiate or risk interaction with the community at large".

Working from this perspective it would be useful to look at some of the major events and developments in which the MEWP participated.

On an initial level, the staff concentrated their efforts almost totally to making contacts and establishing their credibility. Secondly, the MEWP took on itself the role of acting as a service organization. An information and referral service was initiated, follow-up to the immigration department, the courts, etc. was done. Once a level of credibility judged substantial was built up, then the MEWP decided to begin dealing with one of the major problems in the area.

### Education

In dealing with the Greek population it was a wise decision to begin with the general area of education. Education holds a certain mystique for Greek parents and they, perhaps more than others, if its fair to say so, will sacrifice

\*Director MEWP. 1968-1970

anything for their child's education. Be that as it may, the MEWP approached this area from the same basic hypothesis. First, services, plain and simple were offered. Greek language classes on Saturdays were organized and run by the MEWP. Once these classes had established themselves and the MEWP had built up its credibility in the area of education, moves were made towards a broader approach. The contacts built up were used to form a nucleus of interested parents. The topic of parental involvement in the schools was first broached with this nucleus. After much intensive educating of these parents (see next chapter) a first step was made toward the organization of a larger group. Out of a meeting attended by two hundred parents the Hellenic Federation of Parents and Guardians of Greater Montreal emerged. It is important to remember that even at this stage this group was still far from well established. It was felt that two things were necessary. First, an ongoing education of this larger group, and second, some concrete achievement on their part. The education aspect was done in regular meetings with the Federation to iron out its organizational structure and identify its objectives. The first hint that they were becoming an important force in the community came when the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal appointed Mr. J. Kotsos to serve as liaison officer between the schools and Greek parents. Encouraged by this, the Federation decided to run its own afternoon Greek classes, similar to those offered by the MEWP, but in the local schools. A crisis developed when the Protestant School Board replied by saying that arrangements had already been made with the Hellenic Canadian Community for such classes and that further space could not be granted. At that point, the Federation took the one most important step in its history so far - it decided to challenge that decision. The MEWP had worked hard to convince them to do so. A mass meeting was called to which members of the School Board (notably Mr. Stanley, District Superintendent) were invited. The meeting was a more than anticipated success. Over 1000 people attended.

The PSB GM as a result compromised and offered space to both groups. This one victory, if I may call it such, resulted in a distinct uplifting of the spirits of the Federation, in a definite strengthening of self-confidence and in a readiness of the Federation to move towards dealing with problems related to more general things. Thus, when the School Board decided more than a year later to stop students of Park Extension (a basically Greek immigrants area) being bused to Town of Mount Royal (an upper middle class area) the Federation was able to confidently and efficiently work against the move. The mass media, newspaper and television were effectively used to gain public support. It is my belief that this step of "initiating interaction with the community at large" would not have been possible without first having dealt with an issue that concerned only the smaller community.

Today the Federation has a membership of over 2000 families. It has continued its interaction with the community at large and exhibits a healthy attitude towards it. As one of the people I interviewed said (see Dr. G. Tsoukas) "the Federation will be around for a long time to come."

### Employment

In the employment area the MEWP worked to create an association of indigenous workers, to inform them about labour laws, etc. and move them to spread into the community with information, action and guidance to other workers. As a result of these efforts the Hellenic Canadian Labour Association was formed. Many of the contacts that had already been made through ventures mentioned above were used to create this organization.

Here again, that one basic hypothesis about developing self-confidence was followed. It was only after the members could feel secure and convinced of their value by dealing with matters



of importance only on a local level that they could move into contact with, for example, the QFL and CNTU.

### Information

In the third area, that of information, the MEWP undertook to publish a monthly magazine of Canadian news and information. This will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

## A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

In order to evaluate the work of the MEWP it would be useful to develop a theoretical framework of analysis. Stinson, Clarke and McLaughlin have outlined a framework of community development involving three stages:-

- (a) Entry
- (b) Developing a basis for action and
- (c) Strengthening and extending the basis for action

To further clarify this framework, I would like to quote directly from their writings.

### "PHASE I

"Entry" is "getting in" to the community. Many community projects fail to achieve a sound entry even though they "seem" to be functioning at an action level. Involved in gaining entry are a number of factors, including:

- (a) an inviting group or agency
- (b) an issue or problem requiring outside resources
- (c) the credibility of the outside agency
- (d) the image of the Association
- (e) the availability of the necessary staff and resources to respond
- (f) the availability of funding
- (g) adequate facilities
- (h) changing the program or activities of an organization or agency already "in" the community
- (i) taking advantage of new sources of funding

### PHASE II

Strengthening and extending the basis for action (the organization or movement). Few community action projects achieve this third stage although there is a tendency for many to assume they have:



- (a) a well defined and expanding constituency
- (b) clearly defined objectives and operating procedures
- (c) independent financing \*

With this in mind let us return and look at each phase in relation to the MEWP.

#### Phase 1 Factors

(a) Inviting Agency

There was in fact no inviting group or agency. The MEWP was not the result of an agency decision to get involved in community development. That decision came only after the need for such work was brought to the agency's attention by Mr. K. Johnston. The YMCA was only an inviting agency in the sense that it finally accepted Mr. Johnston's\*\* proposals.

(b) Issue or Problem requiring outside resources

The decision of the YMCA to accept the project solved for the MEWP items (b) and (c). Outside resources (office space, duplicating facilities, etc.) were guaranteed and the YMCA provided the MEWP with a certain amount of credibility right from the start.

(c) Item (d), the image of the Association was a minor problem.

Up to the emergence of the MEWP, the YMCA had played a purely social role in the area and in fact to a small minority of that area. The Greek population of the area were not involved in any significant way with the recreational services the YMCA offered.\*\*\* The image of the YMCA forced the MEWP to look at ways for changing the ideology behind the offering of recreational services.

\* YMCA Community Outreach - The Experience of the Montreal and Toronto Associations - by A. Stinson, A. Clarke and J. McLaughlin

\*\* Mr. Johnston had been teaching in the community for five years

\*\*\* Although many Greek immigrants were involved in language classes these classes did not serve to develop a significant relationship between YMCA and the Greek Community

- (d) With the availability of funding (f) through both the YMCA and particularly the Department of National Health and Welfare the problems of resources, staff and facilities, (e) and (g), were solved.
- (e) The YMCA, as I have already stated was not actually "in" the community. The physical plant was there but the programmes did not interact with the community. The addition of the MEWP served to radically change the image of the International branch. It did not totally change the programme but it certainly did change the clientele. The MEWP took advantage of the facilities of the YMCA (pool, gym, camps, etc.) to establish itself by developing contacts and gaining acceptance. The YMCA branch started becoming a truly community building. The people using the facilities did not merely use them and leave. These were now people that were also involved with other community considerations. The International Branch began to be accepted as part of the community. In fact the MEWP offices in the building had been compared to the village fountain where people congregated to exchange news and see each other.

#### Phase I - Comments

Gaining entry means gaining the acceptance of the community. There are certain factors which made this an easier task than it could have been for the MEWP.

The fact that the MEWP was housed in the YMCA building immediately put the project above the community in-fighting. The fact that a non-Greek was the director further insulated the project from mistrust. The fact that the Federal Government was in part funding the project allayed any misgivings the community may have had about the integrity of the funders. These factors and a staff that had not been identified by the community as controversial served to hasten and assure the success of the entry stage for the MEWP.

With respect to the framework outlined here, the MEWP achieved close to 100% success in the entry stage. Within a relatively short time the MEWP was ready to launch itself into Phase II.

## Phase II

- (a) Community groups taking decision related to policy, strategy and programs.

Right from the start, the project staff had to make one basic decision; what would be the policy of the MEWP with respect to existing community groups? This was one of the most important decisions made by the project. The project was faced with two distinct types of groups. On the one hand was the Hellenic Canadian Community and its affiliated organizations (Ladies' Benevolent Society, Church auxiliaries, etc.) which controlled or had in their possession substantial financial resources. On the other hand was the large number of groups comprised almost totally of recent immigrants with not much money and a lot of mistrust and disunity.

Given the aims of the project the choice in retrospect, was clear. The MEWP decided first to ignore the first type of group but not to expend any energy fighting them and secondly to develop friendly relations with the latter type but not to rely on them for the implementation of action. This meant that the MEWP initiated no communications with the Hellenic Canadian Community but did do so with the various regional associations (see description of community). The aim of such communications however was to develop individual member participation, to scout for leaders, to publicize the MEWP, but not to develop group-type work.

Having made this decision the MEWP was faced with the need of developing new organizational structures that would deal with the issues at hand.



In its first year the MEWP was basically able to deal with the problems of education and information. More will be said about information later. Having identified education as one of the basic problems and also as the one that would probably find the most response in the community\* the MEWP had to develop a community organization to deal with it. This was not as simple as drawing up a constitution and finding some members. Once a group of people with sufficient interest and leadership abilities were found through the various means of contact already mentioned, a long, detailed, often tedious education of these people had to take place. In fact, once these people were grouped together, about six months passed with weekly and often semi-weekly meetings before the public heard anything about a Parents Association. This is, however, a very important point and one of the key factors in the success or failure of any community development project. If enough care is not taken to ensure that participants have a fundamental understanding of the issues involved then there is only a lot of goodwill and no means to put it to use.

Eventually, a parents association did get off the ground. Today, that association, the Hellenic Canadian Parents and Guardians Federation boasts upwards of 2500 members.

- (b) Increasing awareness on the part of the staff to potential groups and agencies in the community.

\* In this particular case one of the most pressing problems was also one that was to find great response. This is not, however, always the case. In the early stages of life of a project it would be useful, I feel, to seek out a problem which will mobilize people fairly quickly so as to build confidence in themselves and trust for the project.

Here, too, there were no existing groups or agencies to become increasingly aware of. Here again the MEWP had to move on to its own. An information and referral service was one of the first services offered directly by MEWP staff. Once it was known to the community more than a hundred calls a week were being handled. A legal aid service was also set up with the services of a Greek lawyer, Mr. E. Hadjis. This also marked the first success at the integration of the community's professionals into the community.

- (c) Increasing awareness of and experience with the communications network in the community.

The communication network of the community consisted of two major local weeklies and Greek language broadcasting on a cable station (CHCR) as well as time on a regular AM station (CFMB). With the exception of the AM programme these communications media were plagued by the same mistrust of each other and disunity that characterized the community. Each had its own axe to grind, so to speak. None of them was taken seriously by the community. They existed and continue to do so only because there is a tremendous need to hear and read something that is in the native language. For many, if not the majority, these were the only means of getting information simply because it was in a language that could be understood. The AM programme on the other hand was a straightforward commercial enterprise. Both the newspapers and CHCR were willing to devote space and time to the MEWP in the form of a regular contribution. The staff studied the idea of presenting a weekly radio programme which CHCR would carry. This would offer the advantages of increased publicity, a public forum for discussion and a direct communication link with parts of the community. This had to be weighed against the possibility that the MEWP would be identified as an endorser of the views of CHCR

which represented one segment of the community - the conservative right wing so to speak. The risks of becoming entangled in the mud slinging between the various factions were greater than the possible benefits of a radio programme. Instead of any sort of direct input to the existing media organizations, the MEWP decided to launch its own information vehicle. Echo, a monthly publication began circulating in 1969. It was sent out to 5000 homes, free of charge. It was hoped that it would eventually become a self - sufficient publication. Echo served to introduce the Greek immigrant, in his own language, to Canadian history and political developments and to local issues of direct concern to him. It served both as an information vehicle and as an ambassador for MEWP. More than that it served to lend further credibility to the project for it was a well written, well planned, well presented and interesting publication, which strengthened the MEWP's basis for action. In my view it contributed more to the success of the MEWP than any amount of input into the existing media could have done.

- (d) Increased experience in cooperating with other groups and agencies.

This is one area where the project as a group did not succeed. The significance of this can be questioned. The MEWP had an animating function. It served to start members of the community thinking and acting in groups. As far as the MEWP is concerned, it would be a better question to ask whether the MEWP took advantage of the services of the various groups and agencies so as to make these available to the community and to the groups that were set up. Stated in this way the answer is a definite yes. MEWP worked with Family Services Association to set up a day care center. It worked with the Quebec Bar Association to offer legal aid services, it introduced the Parents Federation to OFY, helped the Workers Association to get LIP money etc.



- (e) Identification of project competence by the community.
- (f) Increasing confidence in the project by the community.

These two items are, I feel, tied together. If one believes that an organization is competent in a given area, one has confidence in that organization. A number of events point to the success of the MEWP in these two areas. Indicators such as the success of the information and referral service, the reception given to legal aid, the response to Echo, prove, that the MEWP had been identified as competent by the community and gained the community's confidence.

- (g) Articulation by the project of a philosophy for change.

This particular point occurred well before the MEWP undertook any action. It is this philosophy, which has to a large extent been responsible for the success of the MEWP. Before developing a philosophy for change, the nature of the community must be clearly understood. In this instance it was an immigrant community. The implication of this are; that one is dealing with a group of people outside the normal values of the host society, that one is dealing with a more insecure group when compared to natives of a country, that one is dealing with a group that has less factual knowledge of events and situations surrounding them, that one is dealing with a group that is more resistant to (or fearful of) involvement.

The aim of the MEWP was to help the Greek immigrant community integrate into Canadian and Quebec life, to benefit from their rights and to recognize and accept their responsibilities. How can this happen, it may be asked, if everything the MEWP has done concerned itself entirely and solely with the Greek population?

Echo was only in Greek, the Day Care Center was for Greeks, the Parents Federation is only for Greeks, the Workers Association is only for Greeks - where is the integration? Doesn't integration require cooperation with the other elements of a society? These are valid questions. Nevertheless, it is often forgotten what it means to work with an immigrant population. To use an analogy - just as you cannot take an elementary school child and put him into university so you cannot take an immigrant population, and expect it to interact with others. There are certain things that have to be learned first. There are certain basic steps that must be mastered before such a group can work cooperatively with others. That group must first find adequate confidence in itself before it can be confident of working with others. That group must first be able to or have attempted to deal with its own problems before it can ask others to help it or offer help to others. Once the problems of lack of confidence, unwillingness to get involved, lack of information, etc. have been overcome internally, only then can a group confidently move towards cooperation with other groups. When finally such a group does move towards cooperation, then integration into the total society is well underway. This is why although the aim of the MEWP was to foster integration it dealt with only areas that affected Greeks. This philosophy of building up confidence first and venturing to outside ties later also reflected itself in the specific undertakings of the project. When the Parents Association was formed, it did not leap to making sweeping proposals for changes. The first major action of the Parents Association was to ask for space to run afternoon Greek language classes - something that has no effect on the regular educational process. Their most recent major action however was to sponsor

and elect a school councillor to the PSBGM. They are now beginning to integrate themselves. They could not have reached that point without having first established the foundations on which to build. Nor could they have done so had they only had a lot of "good intentions". Those initial six months of intensive self-education I spoke of earlier bore fruit. These two basic ideas, (1) to educate as well as organize around issues and (2) to build confidence by first dealing with solvable problems and then expanding the field of action, pervade the actions of the MEWP. It is these two ideas combined that I feel have permitted the MEWP to achieve the successes it did.

#### Phase II - Comments

The MEWP achieved a remarkable amount of success in Phase II. Almost all factors outlined had been successfully implemented. A realistic, philosophy for change had been worked out that allowed the project to develop its base for action in a meaningful way. It overcame the difficulties of working in a community in active disunity where mistrust was dominant. It further succeeded in gaining the trust of that same community.

#### Phase III

The MEWP was given a three year life. As a project, it no longer exists. Phase III can only be examined by looking at what the MEWP helped create. If the organizations it helped create have succeeded in Phase III, then so has the MEWP. This is, I feel, the most crucial of the three phases. If the three points listed below can be achieved, then the time, effort and money that went into the first two phases can be justified.



- (a) A well defined and expanding constituency,
- (b) Clearly defined objectives and operating procedures, and
- (c) Independent financing

Both the Hellenic Canadian Parents and Guardians Federation and the Hellenic Labour Association fulfill these three requirements. They are chartered associations by the Provincial Government.

Their objectives are clearly spelled out and their rules of procedures are available to all their members. Their constituency is defined by their objectives and both associations have a healthy growth rate in membership. Their finances come mainly from their fees and activities which they sponsor (e.g. dances, etc.). The Labour Association has relied more heavily on grant money, however, and there is some uncertainty about how long that will continue.

These two associations have also taken over some of the services originally offered by the MEWP. In the areas of employment and education they do their own information sharing in their respective areas much in the tradition of Echo. The MEWP is in a sense still functioning through these associations.

There have, however, been some failures in this area. Echo was originally intended to become self-supporting, however, it failed. It did not fail because there was no need for it. Voluntary subscriptions and donations kept coming in, but they were simply not enough. In the case of the other local papers both are published by people who do more than just publish a newspaper.\*

\* In fact Echo was refused government grants because it was felt that it would be unfair, in terms of competition, to the other local newspapers.

Although I cannot say so with absolute certainty it may be that their newspapers are subsidized by their other businesses.

There is still a need for information and referral services in the community. This aspect of the MEWP also failed to carry on in a direct way after the money ran out.

On the whole, however, I feel, that the main thrust of the project has managed to reach and successfully deal with Phase III. The other services I have mentioned may well grow out of the continuing influence of the involvement of more and more people in the issues of their community.

#### APPENDIX I

I have already outlined areas in which the MEWP became involved. The task was an immense one. To get some indigenous reaction to the MEWP, I have interviewed a number of people that had in one way or another been involved with or affected by the work of the MEWP. The sample is small. It is however representative of almost all the different groups of people who had some stake in what the MEWP did.



TIMOTHY HADJIS

Mr. T. Hadjis had long been involved in the Roumeliotan Association before he became into contact with the MEWP. He works as an electrician with CN Railways. His formal education goes up to Grade 8 and he has been here for years. Aside from the fact that he holds a technical job he is fairly representative of the average Greek immigrant. We spoke for about an hour and a half about what he felt the MEWP had done for the Greek community.

I feel I should mention that his first reaction to hearing that I was doing an evaluation of the MEWP was one of enthusiasm - "Excellent, he said, it is good that you will write about it. More people must hear about what it has done. It has awakened us and there should be more things like that."

Mr. Hadjis felt quite strongly that more projects such as MEWP are necessary. He felt that the MEWP in particular had been very effective in filling what he saw as an immediate need - parent involvement in schools. I asked him for some specific examples of where the Parents Federation had been of tangible use. He quoted the need for Greek language classes, the issues of busing of Greek students out of TMR schools which was fought and delayed by the Federation, the election of a Greek school commissioner sponsored and supported by the Federation as well as others of a social and cultural nature. He emphasized that had it not been for MEWP these things would never have happened.

I then asked Mr. Hadjis if he felt that MEWP had had any effect on the official Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. He expressed the sentiment that others I interviewed also expressed, which is that MEWP acted as a threat to the community which forced them to rethink some of their policies and actions. He feels that at least now the Hellenic Community recognizes the existence of the mass of Greek immigrants.

The next area we covered in our discussion was where the MEWP could have improved. Mr. Hadjis said that he really could not think of any such suggestions except perhaps that MEWP should have had a longer life.

VAGELIS SOUZOS

Mr. V. Souzos, a student at McGill University when the MEWP was in operation, had served as a volunteer teacher in the Saturday Greek classes and tutorials organized by the MEWP. Since then he has kept an interest in the developments in the community and has numerous contacts in the Parents Federation and the Workers Association. Here too the conversation revolved around the same questions I asked Mr. Hadjis. Mr. Souzos felt that the work done by MEWP was extremely useful. He saw the Greek community in much the same light I have described it earlier in this paper and he felt the MEWP had made a dent in the isolation armour. As President of the McGill Hellenic Club he had served as a representative to the committee for the election of school commissioners to represent the Greek population. The fact that an interest by the community was taken and that a commissioner was elected was, he felt, proof of the impact of MEWP. This was, he pointed out, the first time such a well planned, organized attempt to elect someone to a body outside the Greek community was made. The effort paid off in the election of Mr. G. Vogas as school commissioner. Mr. Souzos also saw the Workers Association as a positive force in the community. He pointed out that the MEWP succeeded in orienting people, who were already socially and politically active with respect to events in Greece, to the problems facing Greeks here. That was, he felt, both noteworthy and important for the Greek community.

Mr. Souzos felt that the MEWP should have spent more time in teaching people how to effectively work in groups and committees and should have more time developing leadership qualities. He felt that

more could have been done in this respect had there been more time available to MEWP.

I asked Mr. Souzos if he felt the MEWP had had any effect on the values of Greek parents. Were they now more able to accept Canadian norms? He answered with a definite no. (This would also confirm my own feelings on this matter), He pointed out that such values are too deeply ingrained in the character of the Greek people. Whenever old values and new values come into conflict (e.g. dating behaviour) with respect to their children, the parents would make every possible effort to maintain the old values. "We should remember that although such values may seem totally incongruous with the present reality it is not a simple matter for a first generation immigrant to adjust to the present reality."

DENNIS ADAMOU

Mr.D. Adamou is presently a full time employee of the Workers Association. He has long been involved in the "happenings" in the Greek Community. He had been particularly active in political organizing since the coup d'etat in Greece in 1967.

Mr. Adamou also commended the work done by the MEWP. He felt, as Mr. Souzos, that it was particularly encouraging to see people, including himself, turn their attention to more local matters, directly affecting their everyday life. He also felt heartened by the fact that the Hellenic Community had been forced, he felt, to move away from their traditional posture of neglect of the Greek immigrants.



He felt his own association is both a necessary and useful factor in the community. He pointed to some of the work that has been done through his association such as translation and distribution of labour laws, contacts with the CNTU and QFL, the organizing of at least one local CNTU affiliate, as well as serving as an employment agency.

I asked him if he felt that his previous interest with Greek matters had ended. To quote him "I do of course take a keen interest in what is happening in Greece. I am very interested. Now, however, I think I use my time and interests more effectively. I have always fought what I felt were injustices. Now I can fight for real things and real people, here. Perhaps now I am doing more than I ever did. This is not theory, this is action". He felt that had it not been for MEWP he would have tried to do something in this area somehow, but the MEWP offered the opportunity for something concrete to happen. He pointed out that the MEWP had not been able to combat the suspicions and disunity which he felt still exist but that despite that people had managed to turn their attention to the here and now. To expand on this Mr. Adamou felt that there is still a basic mistrust of his association because much of its active membership comes from people formerly involved in political action against the junta in Greece but that many other people are using its services despite this.

MR. MANOLAKOS

Mr. Manolakos has long been involved with the Hellenic community and is at the moment the President of that body.

Mr. Manolakos felt that citizen action groups involved in an animating function, such as the MEWP helped organize can be very useful in any community. They do, however, he felt, often attach

themselves to various political movements which tend to overshadow the good work they do. As far as the MEWP itself was concerned, Mr. Manolakos felt that the project had made some very good contributions and that the citizens of the area had benefited. He felt quite strongly that the Hellenic Parents and Guardian Federation was the most significant outcome of MEWP. He was certain that the organization would be in existence for a long time and it has been instrumental in helping to direct the interests of parents towards what is happening in the schools.

Mr. Manolakos also felt that the MEWP had indeed forced the reshaping of the thinking of some of the leaders of the Hellenic Community, he himself being one. In his own words "... organizations such as these serve to make stagnant groups conscious to certain needs." As a result of such rethinking the Hellenic Community is now involved in many areas it had previously ignored. For example, there is now:-

- (1) A full time social worker to deal with cases before the juvenile court.
- (2) An employment referral center.
- (3) An emergency accommodation center.
- (4) A vocational training center for seamstresses.
- (5) A library.

Mr. Manolakos felt that MEWP had tended to ignore certain established organizations in its life. He felt that the MEWP had been rather antagonistic towards the Hellenic Community. He thought that the project should have cooperated with the Church, for example, as well as other organized groups in the Hellenic Community.

VAGELIS HADJIS

Mr. V. Hadjis is one of the few Greek speaking lawyers in Montreal. He had participated, on a voluntary basis, quite extensively in some of the work of the MEWP project. He had acted as the lawyer for the legal aid offered by MEWP, as legal advisor to the Hellenic Parents and Guardians and is presently legal advisor to the Hellenic Federation of Societies.

During our discussion, Mr. Hadjis made it clear to me that he gave his time because he believed in the need for people to recognize their rights. He also believed that the best way to effect change is to motivate people to deal with their problems themselves. He felt that the MEWP had been desperately needed. To quote him "before the project there were many people sitting in cafes and living rooms complaining, the MEWP gave them the option to do something." He felt that the most important achievement and the most urgent had been the organization of the Parents Federation. He attributes a large part of the success of this organization to the work put in organizing its inception by the MEWP staff. Mr. Hadjis has also worked closely with the Workers organization. In this area he expressed some apprehension. He stated that although to date the work they have done (see Mr. Adamou's interview) has been useful he was somewhat apprehensive about the political leanings of the group. As far as the MEWP was concerned, however, he felt that it had done its job in that field.

On a more general level Mr. Hadjis expressed agreement that MEWP had had a definite affect on the character of the community. People were, he said, more aware, more concerned, less afraid. The Hellenic Community, he felt, had also sat up and taken notice. They too, were obliged to attempt some sort of approach to the problems of the immigrant which they had for so long ignored.



Mr. Hadjis also stated that the MEWP had overcome much of what had been the downfall of other attempts to organize action. He commended the project for having overcome the distrustfulness of the community, for having avoided political coloration, and entanglement in the community in-fighting. He recognized that these in themselves were noteworthy achievements but he further went on to say that he would have hoped more could have been achieved. Here again I would like to quote him "...although much was done, the money that went into the project should have had a greater impact. There could have been a more effective use of resources available."

GEORGE TSOUKAS

Dr. Tsoukas was involved with the MEWP in an attempt to set up a medical clinic in the Greek community. The effort got through the initial planning and contact stage but fell through at the financing level.

In Dr. Tsoukas' view, the project had been an enormous success. " You know that even today I hear mention of that project in some of the strangest places, hospitals for instance. I think the MEWP was what started the ball rolling here. The community is definitely different. The Parents Federation has been a tremendous asset to the community. I regret very much not having been able to complete the clinic we were planning. Had it opened it may have met with a lot of resistance from other doctors or even the Hellenic Community but it would have been the crowning of the whole effort".

Dr. Tsoukas felt that the time in which the MEWP had to work was short. That the community could have benefited from one or two more years of the MEWP he felt.

DR. PATTERSON - Chairman Protestant School Board  
of Greater Montreal

The interview I held with Dr. Patterson was a very brief one. I did not have the opportunity to adequately explore his views on the effect of the Hellenic Parents and Guardians. I asked Dr. Patterson if he felt the Association had had any effect on the schools in the area. He answered by saying that he was aware that parents in that area were keenly interested in the conditions of the school in the area. This, I feel, is a valuable statement, proving that MEWP had a very real effect in the area. Previous to the MEWP there was no interest. If the chairman of the Board can state that he is aware of a keen interest then something contributed to the development of the interest. Dr. Patterson further stated that he is also pleased that there is a representative of the community on the School Board. This too is a direct result of the Parents Association involvement in educational matters.

I also held peripheral conversations with the following people:-

Mr. P. Spanoganis

Mr. P. Tsakonas

Mr. P. Ferentinos

All three had been quite heavily involved in the projects work. I have not written separate sections for the first three people since their sentiments are pretty well the same as those of Mr. T. Hadjis. All three felt the project was extremely useful in that it motivated and activated them to attempt to deal with their problems themselves. They felt the Greek immigrant community was a lot better off as a result. They cited the same examples - involvement gives one a sense of belonging. Each expressed the feeling that now he felt more at home here in Canada, that he was more aware of his rights and his responsibilities.

## CHAPTER IV

### A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE



### A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

As I have outlined earlier in this report, the Greek community prior to the MEWP, was an isolated, unactive one. It is my view that the time was ripe for a project such as the MEWP. Given the myraid of problems - that, education, housing, recreation, day care, medical, legal, employment, information, etc. any group of people which could have gained the confidence of the community would have done as much and more than MEWP. The success of the project is due to a number of factors. First, it chose to deal with issues which that the community felt were problems. It did not seek to create issues that were not there. Second, it chose to deal with these problems with an indigenous staff. This was not a group of outsiders that were going to show the people the way. Virtually all staff members were people who had gone through what the residents of the area were going through, had experienced the same background and empathized with them. Third, the aim of the project was not to solve the problems but to help create the framework through which the people of the area themselves could deal with these problems as they saw fit. Fourth, the people involved were not rushed by the project staff into making any radical decisions. If they were to ever be able to make such decisions they had to first build up their moral, confidence and knowledge. Fifth, the MEWP did not only organize around an issue for actions sake, it took time to educate the people involved about the issue. Lastly and definitely least, luck. I feel this element always enters into such ventures. A specific issue may arise at a particularly opportune time. In itself, though, it contributes nothing, it is the readiness and ability to make use of such occurances that is important.

Aside from the framework which was set up (e.g. Parents, Workers) what else was achieved by the MEWP? I can only answer this from a personal perspective I have gained during my involvement with the



Greek community. I believe that two major things were achieved.

(1) Whereas before the MEWP the various organized groups were separate and often worked at cross purposes many of these associations have banded together in the Federation of Societies. Although this had been attempted before this is the first time it has succeeded in getting off the ground and it is now beginning to function smoothly. The MEWP cannot take credit for this specific achievement. Many of the people involved with the Federation of Societies however are the same people who worked closely with the MEWP. I feel that these people are key factors to the success of the Federation of Societies. They have gained, through their contact with MEWP, the experience necessary to effectively work in groups and to deal with issues.

(2) Another area where I feel the MEWP has had an important effect is in bringing the professionals of the community closer to the population. Before the MEWP there was no organized contact between the "intelligentsia" and the community. As an indirect result of the MEWP the Hellenic Canadian Society of University Graduates has become an active member of the Federation of Societies. The MEWP had much the same effect on this body as it has had on the Hellenic Community. It forced the University Graduates Society to re-evaluate its role. After some soul searching this body decided that it should offer its talents for the use of the immigrant community. In doing this it dropped an attitude of aloofness in favour of one of involvement. The MEWP has not been a panacea for the multitude of problems facing the Greek community. It has, however had effects which are important for those involved and it has helped move the Greek community somewhat out of its isolation. It has helped create a more meaningful life for members of that community and it has shown them how to help themselves. In my own view and in the view expressed by all the people with whom I spoke to, the MEWP was a definite success.

OBSERVATIONS

1. That the M.E.W.P. demonstrated that the widely accepted homogeneity of this ethnic group was a distortion and that the structures of the identifiable and accepted community organization(s) in fact hindered the progress and integration of the immigrant majority.
2. That a guided developmental process whereby the minority group gains the required self-awareness and confidence can be instrumental in the process of integration. The integration of an active, responsible citizen aware and "alive" in terms of his/her cultural identity. The process of integration if it is to be satisfactory to all concerned parties requires that the minority be sufficiently powerful to ensure a continuing identity and therefore, input within the host group.
3. That the community development process if it is to have a continuing effect requires the vision, analysis and planning best exhibited by an outside, but informed and committed, agent. The agent's role is not one of paternalism but of resource and objectivity.
4. That social and individual development is dependent on the availability of supportive social systems and structures. Development can have a continuing effect where it concerns itself with the building and maintenance of such structures.
5. That the M.E.W.P. has been successful in the development of necessary community structures but that these find it difficult to maintain themselves without financial support beyond the three year life of a project.
6. That the M.E.W.P. did effect the lives of some 12-15,000 people. The government support equates to approximately \$4 per individual over a three year period.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That greater efforts be made in terms of funds and identification of spokesmen to ensure that traditional ethnic structures are not in a position to dictate the continuity of distortion and repression.
2. That when an analysis of intra-community events and conflicts is required, it be made in consideration of the political and social realities within the given community.
3. That funds be made available to ensure that community organizations and systems that contribute to the "integration from power" concept are maintained. The granting of funds in this manner would be more successful in promoting the concept of multiculturalism than the support of purely cultural group and events.
4. That the concept of the "ghetto" is basic to the initial survival of a minority group. The need is not for the destruction of such ghettos but for the development within them of self-awareness and a positive view of their potential role and the availability of structures that will lead to interaction and integration.
5. That in the light of the M.E.W.P. experience greater efforts be made to ensure funds are directly contributing to the attainment of project goals and objectives. The major contribution in terms of developmental goals is the availability of staff resources.